



News Release

STATE OF MARYLAND

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC SAFETY AND CORRECTIONAL SERVICES

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Maryland's Largest Prison Turns 20 on August 12

Eastern Correctional Institution is Lower Delmarva's largest employer and a huge economic engine for Somerset County

TOWSON, MD (August 8, 2007)---When Princess Anne resident Mike Miller was looking for work in the early 1980s, his prospects for local employment were grim: Somerset County's unemployment rate routinely topped 15%; jobs were virtually nonexistent.

Desperate for stable employment, Mike signed on with the Maryland Division of Correction and left for a prison in Hagerstown, four hours, three mountains, and a lifetime removed from the breadbasket Shore farms and watermen's communities that Mike had grown up with.

Little did Mike Miller realize then that soon, he would be heading back home again: the state had negotiated a deal to build its biggest prison, to be called Eastern Correctional Institution, just off U.S. 13 in Westover, four miles south of Princess Anne.

In the summer of 1987, Mike Miller came home, to a temporary office a block or two from where he had grown up on Main Street---to a training facility for the prison housed in Mike's own alma mater, the old Washington High School.

On August 12, Mike Miller will be among 76 ECI employees for whom celebrating the Lower Shore's largest employer is truly a big deal: those 76 ECI employees have been there since the first bus load of inmates arrived back in 1987.

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Today, ECI employs more people (roughly 1,000) than any other entity on the entire Lower Eastern Shore; houses more inmates (3,354) than any other prison in Maryland; and operates with an annual budget exceeding \$80 million. Local businesses and charities long ago discovered the prison's need for services and the benevolence of its workforce.

Even the inmates get into the act in a positive way: Every year, floats built by inmates using scrap materials win top honors in various Eastern Shore holiday parades.

The prison has many innovative programs and services, from S.I.T.T. (Staying in Touch Teens), which offers educational services to the children of inmates; to a strong inmate-and staff-run youth deterrent program; to a program called Choices, in which correctional officers on their own time visit fraternal clubs and schools in an effort to keep kids out of prison.

ECI's gala celebrating its 20th anniversary will be held at 6 p.m. on Friday, August 17 at the Henson Center on the campus of the University of Maryland Eastern Shore. Members of the media are encouraged to do a story on the anniversary of this important public safety institution.

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